

Mr. Granger's remarks,
In reply to Mr. Gillett,
On the motion to commit the bill to distribute the proceeds of the sales of the public lands.

CONGRESS, WEDNESDAY, MAY 11.
Mr. GRANGER claimed the indulgence of the House to be permitted to reply to the several questions that had been addressed to him by his colleague, (Mr. Gillett.)

Leave having been granted,

Mr. Granger said: As I am bound to presume, Mr. Speaker, that my honorable colleague has come to the conclusion that it is high time to abandon all non-committal candidates, or that he would never have presumed to cæciliæ me in the manner he has done, I will endeavor, without preparation and without a document before me to which I can refer, to answer, as plainly and simply as I am able, the several questions he has propounded to me, presuming that he and the party with whom he acts are as ready to declare their sentiments as are those who may be opposed to them. I have been some time aware that, ever since those in power found that they held up to this country a hope of the distribution of the public revenue after the national debt was extinguished; that from the moment they discovered the debt was cancelled, the next plan to be adopted was to devise ways and means by which those funds could be retained in the hands of the party, to the destruction of the very hopes which they had created. It is with a view to carry out this purpose, and I here boldly make the charge, that many of the plans now presented for squandering the public treasure have been introduced—plans which, had they been presented here four years ago, would have hurled our rulers from their places. What has been the doctrine contended for by this Administration? A doctrine, as we well know, which has commanded itself to a majority of the People of the United States, which People, I trust, are now prepared to hold those who have made these promises to their performance?

It has been said that your public debt was first to be paid off; that a most rigid economy was to be enforced in every Department, civil and military, until that debt was extinguished; and that then decent & proper defences for the country should be created; but that the last balance which must remain should be divided amongst the People, from whom it came. I am not prepared to quote accurately from the message of the Executive in 1829; but I do say that message, and the one of the following year, held up to the People of this country the distribution of the public revenue among the several States, as the only just and equal measure by which the surplus funds could be returned to the pockets of the People.

I do say, further, that the Executive power of New York, which, from the year 1828, has taken care on all occasions to interlink its concerns with what has been conceived to be the glorious Administration of the General Government, has, year after year, held up to the hope of the People a belief that the public funds would be divided; and the only question reserved was a question of constitutional right. A resolution, expressive of the wishes of that State, passed the popular branch of its Legislature during the session of 1831, by a unanimous vote, and a strong report in its favor was presented to the Senate by a committee, at the head of which was a prominent leader of the dominant party; which party has lately, in the same hall of legislation, refused even to print resolutions which were offered, asking for a distribution of a portion of the proceeds of the public lands, according to the provisions of this bill.

[Mr. Underwood here rose, and stated that he had the President's message of 1829, and extracts from Governor Troup's messages in 1830 and 1831 before him, and that he would read the passages referred to by the gentleman from New York.]

Mr. Granger resumed. I do not care about the precise words, sir; I pledge myself on their general tenor. No gentleman can gainsay the position I have assumed. I take it in its broadest sense, and hazard myself upon it.

To avoid this promised result, and to disappoint this justly created hope, every plan which ingenuity can devise has been thrown into this Hall, and held out to the capidity of certain interests in this country, to retain, if possible, the public money in the Treasury; and the gentleman from New York, with a view to create an aggregate of expenditure equal to the present amount of those moneys, has propounded to me a set of questions, which I will endeavor to answer.

The gentleman commits himself on nothing; he asks me to commit myself on everything. I am willing to do so, and that he is so anxious to avoid all declaration of responsibility, I should suppose he had abandoned the school of politics to which he has been pledged; but when at last, after thus boldly cæciliæ me, in a manner certainly unprecedented, but of which I do not complain, and after demanding my opinion upon subjects many of which have not been and will not be presented for the action of the House, he reserves the right of withholding his own opinions, and of still fighting under the chameleon banner of his non-committal chieftain. I suppose he has yet a little inkling of his first love left, which he will not entirely abandon until he is satisfied that the cause is desperate.

The gentleman first asks me whether I am willing to go into expenditures necessary for the proper defence of the country. I suppose he means a defence of the seaboard. If he wishes a direct answer, whether I am for or against the bill reported from the Committee on Military Affairs, an amendment to which is now under discussion, I say I am opposed to it. I take this opportunity to tell him, and I will endeavor to show, that this is a bill hostile to the well settled policy of this country. If he asks whether I am willing to adopt the amendment of the gentleman who stands at the head of the Committee of Ways & Means, which is based on the assumption that funds enough should be expended to arm all the fortifications now in existence, I say that I am ready to expend such sum as can be judiciously expended during the present year in arming those fortifications. That amendment provides for an appropriation of \$760,000. If I am correctly informed, this is more than can be expended during the current year; but, acting as I do under the

indulgence of the House, I will not go into the details of this subject now; but, from the examination I have given to it, I should suppose that some amount, from 400,000 to \$500,000, might be advantageously applied to arming the fortifications on the seaboard. Whatever that sum may be, it shall cheerfully receive my vote. I will not vote for a dollar beyond it.

What is the history of the fortification system in this country? For he who will not learn wisdom from the past is but a dull scholar. In the year 1816 or 1817, (I do not know the precise period, I speak from memory, and if in error, hope to be corrected,) a plan of defence was devised, under the surveys and estimates made by a distinguished foreigner, who had arrived in our country a short time previously. That plan was partially embodied upon; but it is not material to dwell on this branch of the subject further than to say that, since the late war, we have expended something like twelve millions on fortifications.

During the Administration of the gentleman in front of me, (Mr. A. T. Ainsworth) and during the present Administration, there has never been a denial of one dollar to carry on these works; and yet, what did my colleague (Mr. Crambridge) tell us the other day? That, after all the boasting of the efficiency of the present Administration, and after the immense expenditure we have incurred, with the single exception of the works of Charleston, South Carolina, there is neither a fact nor a condition proper for a defence, nor scarcely a gun in the nation fit for use. Yes, sir, an Administration which, for three years, has stood in a position where it was holding up to the People of this country the probability of a collision with one of the most powerful nations of the earth, has never asked a dollar to complete these works. And now, in a time of profound peace, when the threatened dangers of war have passed from us, we must commence a large system, to give character to the defences of the country. Sir, it is ridiculous; it is contrary to the spirit and genius of our institutions, thus to make that kind of preparation for war which belongs to the Governments of the continent of Europe. It has been opposed by the statesmen of our country from its earliest history, and the Administration of 1798 was driven from power because it advocated a system of defence connected with a standing army, not one third as large as would be necessary to man the new works contemplated by the bill upon your table.

If the doctrine of public expenditure, which is advocated at this day, had been advanced in the days of elder Adams, he could hardly have defended himself from popular personal violence; and now, he who dare even question the throwing away of millions, is marked down as opposed to the republicans of the country. What little democracy I have, and it is quite as much as belongs to most of the patent republicans of the present day, is of the Jeffersonian school; and by the principles of that school I am willing to be tried, here and elsewhere. Thus much for the public defences of the country; and I here repeat, that, with the exception I have named, I shall record my vote against this mammoth bill.

We next come to railroads for the transportation of the mails; and the gentleman wishes an answer to this proposition, as he really thought that it was about to be adopted by a majority of this House. In the other branch of this Legislature, there is a distinguished gentleman, around whose up the smile of triumph curled, when he hears leaders of the party advocating this system. I think that when the party are ready to make railroads through every section of the country, and to become stockholders in corporations for the transportation of the mails, they had better bind their censures upon what have been called the latitudinarian doctrines of a prominent statesman from the West; for it is a point to which, I believe, even his imagination never stretched. This is my answer to that question.

I now come to his custom-houses. On this, as on every thing connected with the permanent character of this country, I am amongst the liberals. I consider that the public buildings of a country stand forth to the world, not only in the present day, but to all future time, to mark the character of the nation by whom they were erected. When called upon to make appropriations for custom-houses in New York or Boston, or at any other important points, or for hospitals or other permanent improvements in the West, I shall record my vote in favor of such edifices as will demonstrate to our descendants in future ages that, even at this day, there existed here a People from whom they might be proud to claim their ancestry; and no man will find me flinching on any question calling for a public expenditure which shall decline to the world that we stand here presenting the proud example of a nation, scarce half a century in age, which has been able to sweep off the debt created by two wars of glory, and has accumulated funds not only to erect these splendid monuments of art, but to provide for the equal benefit of the People of those States whose position forbids their participation in the benefits of such expenditures.

The gentleman asks me whether I am in favor of the necessary appropriations to arm and to organize the militia? Strongly committed as I am compelled to be on all subjects, although the gentleman from New York (Mr. Gillett) has reported the bill, he plays non-committal here again. For, sir, while that gentleman has taken good care to call my attention to this point, he has taken equally good care, I believe, not to inform me or the House what sum will be necessary to carry out this project.

Mr. Gillett said that he had not averred that no one knew the amount, but that gentlemen differed as to what that amount was. Mr. Granger. What do you say it is?

Mr. Gillett. About seventeen millions.

Mr. Granger. Seventeen millions! Well, Seventeen is a favorite number in New York, and one upon which our State was once revolutionized. The gentleman has called upon me to declare the opinion of a distinguished individual, as to whether he is ready and willing to devote the surplus revenue to the colonization of people of color. I will not presume to answer that question for another; nor will I advise vent on the impropriety or delicacy of addressing it to me; but, for myself, although the object of the inquiry cannot be doubted, I have no hesitation in answering it; for I have no opinions on this or any other subject, that are not as clear and open as the moon-day sun. I, sir, would not like the general fund of this nation for such a purpose. And why would I not? Because, were there no other reasons, there is a large portion of the People of this country whose interest in that fund is as dear and sacred as mine, or that of my constituents, who might feel that their rights had been invaded by such a course. They might feel so.

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Mr. Gillett said that he had stated that twenty-two millions would be required.

Mr. Granger. Twenty-two millions!—

Well, sir, that I should think would guard the Republic very respectfully. The gentleman asks me whether I am willing to spend that sum in addition to the appropriations for our defence? I will answer him in less than two words—in two letters. No!

I am not prepared to do any such thing, nor is any other gentleman in this Hall.

My colleague has adverted to the system of internal improvement generally. I have

little to say on this question, but will re-

mark that those who know me, know well

that I have never been amongst those who

construed very freely the powers of the

General Government in this respect. I may

have regretted that those powers were not more clearly given. I may have seen, in common with other gentlemen, that, had such powers been more freely conferred, instances might have arisen where improvements could be carried on more successfully under the General Government than by State authority. So believing, and so hoping, I have yielded my assent freely and fully to what has often been most beneficial to the country.

But I think the question of internal improvements by the General Government on which gentlemen may honestly differ, without a difference of political views generally. On this point, therefore, I have only to request that the gentleman from New York will lend me a single ounce of his gold coin, if he thinks the party can spare so much, and hope that he will join with me in endeavoring to procure such a distribution of the public money as will be in the power of the several States to make these improvements in the manner they may deem most beneficial.

But, sir, the gentleman has stated that one reason why the bill before the House should be committed to the Committee of Ways and Means, and not even to the Committee on Public Lands, is because the Committee on Public Lands are favorable to the graduation of the price of these lands. Speaking, as I am, under special indulgence, I do not feel at liberty now to detain the House with any views as to the relative merits of the several propositions that have occupied the attention of our people in relation to the public domain; but here, at this time, a most important question arises. The people of the West are called upon not only to surrender this bill, but to surrender the various other projects which they advocate, and are to be told that these funds should be for their benefit; but, because they differ about the manner in which the avails should be distributed, therefore, they are all to be thrown away on the defense of the Atlantic frontier. I know not but that gentlemen of the West who contend for the graduation principle, and in which, so far as it relates to actual settlers, I am willing to indulge them to a certain extent, are content with such reasoning; but I have yet to learn that their constituents are to find, in an expenditure of all the revenues of the nation for the next twenty years upon fortifications, a relief for the evils of which they complain.

I warn that people, I warn the people of the whole Union, that the plans of this year are not to apply only to the Treasury of this year; that, if you do not stop these grand schemes at the threshold, not only will the forty millions in your Treasury be exhausted, but that you will find a tomb in which the funds of this nation will be buried for thirty years to come. He who knows anything of the cost of public works, knows well that the first appropriation is generally but an entering wedge to expenditures of quadruple the estimate first given; and when gentlemen from the East and the West are called on to vote on these propositions, let them bear in mind that the adoption of this bill, as reported by the Committee on Military Affairs, is to fasten them to this ear of extravagance, until every dollar derived from imposts, and the tens of millions yet to be received for Western lands, will be swallowed up in this magnificent, useless scheme of expenditure. I belong to a seaboard State, one as liberal in its appropriations as any State in this Union; but I can never consent by my vote to do such manifest injustice to different parts of our country. The hope that when the country had been placed in its present position, the money would be divided, is a hope that has long been held out by those in power; and so far as my vote can go, they shall have an opportunity of redeeming their pledges. I will never postpone the day, either by using the money already on hand, or by entering upon a system which will call for untold millions.

The gentleman has said one thing, which amounts to something more like an attack on a public officer than any thing I have heard in this Hall. He says, no one knows what amount of money is in the public Treasury. If no one else knows, I move a resolution, calling on Mr. Reuben M. Whitney, to which I believe, even his imagination never stretched. This is my answer to that question.

I now come to his custom-houses. On this, as on every thing connected with the permanent character of this country, I am amongst the liberals. I consider that the public buildings of a country stand forth to the world, not only in the present day, but to all future time, to mark the character of the nation by whom they were erected.

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ing the gentleman from New York; for I think we should have turn and turn about in matters of this kind. I will ask him, as connected with the public funds, and with the hopes that have been held up to this nation, about where these funds are, and whether it is not about time to look after them? If gentlemen believe what has so often been repeated in this House, and

carried through the newspapers to every

corner of the Union; and if the gentleman

himself, (Mr. Gillett,) who has introduced

the bill for the "Fabrication of gold coin," (&

I wish that gold coin was the only fabrication

that has been given to the world on

this subject,) I will ask him whether, if the assertions made here that a metallic currency

is the only true basis of security be correct, we had not better divide our funds as

soon as possible, for fear of bankruptcy.

On this subject I offer no opinions of my

own, but call on gentlemen of the Administra-

tion to practise as they have practised.

nation; for I know myself too well to doubt that under such circumstances I might think vote.

But if there is a man on whom the brand of opprobrium should be placed, and who should stand marked in a community as deserving the severest censure, it is he who could trifl with a question of this kind merely for the purpose of holding out to the Public this false evidence that the dry has